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## CURRENT OPINION

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### **The Use and Abuse of Creeds**

The demand of the modern day for reality in religion is echoed in an article by Dr. E. F. Tittle in the November-December number of the *Methodist Review*, entitled, "The Use and Abuse of Creeds." Everyone must have a creed. The great strife of our time is not so much the struggle of arms as of ideas and ideals. We are witnessing today the clashing of creeds. Religious creeds are inevitable and, moreover, they are desirable: As friendly guideposts on the road to the everlasting truth of things, religious creeds are of inestimable value. But they have not always been friendly guideposts. They have been clubs to compel all to believe what some have believed. So used they are mischievous and barriers to progress. This use of creeds tends to intellectualize religion. Yet there are very few churches with which one may unite without meeting the creedal test. And the creedal test is too exacting and not exacting enough—intellectually too difficult, ethically too easy. It has made church membership impossible to some very good men. "Surely there was something wrong with an ecclesiastical test which excluded such a man as Abraham Lincoln from the fellowship of the church." On the other hand, the creedal test is ethically not exacting enough. Many men do not think their religion. To them the intellectual creed means nothing and their spirit is not changed by great tasks. The church should ask of her incoming members: "Are you willing to make sacrifices? Are you willing to do the will of God at whatever personal cost? The world is in a bad way. It is suffering. Are you going to help? Are you willing to seek first the Kingdom of God?"

Another evil of creedal compulsion is the fact that it has prevented co-operation among men who might have worked enthu-

siastically in the achievement of human values. It has divided Christendom into a multitude of warring sects suspicious of each other.

There are signs that a new day is dawning. Heresy trials are less frequent. The war between science and religion is losing its meaning. Still further, to be recognized as a religious man today one must do more than give assent to theological formularies. He must be a co-worker with God at his tasks of moralizing business, humanizing industry, purifying politics, Christianizing international relationships. And now at last the churches are uniting. "Differing still in their formal beliefs, their ritualistic observances, and their political organization, they are nevertheless co-operating in determined and enthusiastic endeavor to realize in this world the Kingdom of God."

### **Spiritual Effects of the War**

The *Hibbert Journal* for October carries an article entitled "War as Medicine," by G. F. Bridges, in which war is lauded as the great stimulant to moral and spiritual advance. The words of the Master of Baliol are used as a text: "War is an intellectual awakener and a moral tonic. It stirs men to think and thinking is what we most lack in England. It creates a conscious unity of feeling which is the atmosphere needed for a new start. It purges away old strifes and sectional aims and raises us a while into a higher and purer air. It helps us to recapture some of the lofty and intense patriotism of the ancient world." Mr. Bridges argues that the war has been in reality a spiritual tonic; that tens of thousands of people who were thinking of nothing but their own livelihood, their own interests and pleasures, are today bending their energies to the service of the state and of others. The war is making multitudes into good soldiers who know

how to put duty first and the reward second. This is for most of us a moral ascent. It is also teaching comradeship. The soldier has to live close to his fellows. The army is a great school of mutual forbearance and helpfulness.

It is rarely the case that wars are fought without the firm belief on the part of the fighters that their cause is righteous and worthy. No man can predict that there will not be great ideal causes for wars in the future as in the past. Nations may be so profoundly possessed by great ideals that they will defy the world in their support. Where wars have ethical convictions behind them even civil wars may be moral stimulants and the nursing mothers of heroes. They may "cause the loss of many lives, shatter the happiness of many homes, spread destruction through a smiling land, but it is some offset against these calamities that it raises human effort, endurance, public spirit, and power of self-sacrifice to a pitch rarely attained in peace."

War is the final test of conviction. To be willing to suffer and die for a cause is an incontestable proof of sincere belief. And how in the last resort can man show that he is in earnest except by being willing to kill and be killed?

We can hardly look forward confidently to the abolition of war, and it may be a fortunate thing for us that we cannot. The effect of the total absence of conflict is to make us cold, soft, lazy, and pleasure-loving rather than amiable and gentle. "There may be after all some truth in Treitschke's remark, 'The living God will see to it that war constantly returns as a dreadful medicine for the human race.'"

The other side of the argument is presented by Adele Phillips and Russell Phillips by means of a vivid picture of the degeneration in spiritual tone of the society of the city of Berlin under the influence of the war. They write in the *Atlantic Monthly* for January under the caption "The Decline of the

Berliner." They were bewildered by the swift swing of mental attitude of the German from amiable, law-abiding peaceableness to a fierce lust for blood. They had been entirely won by the German characteristics of cleanliness, candor, fearlessness of expression, moral courage, and love of justice. Then with the war came a sudden change. From burgher to professor "a nebulous moral turpitude befogged their mentality. Duplicity and perfidy were the gods of the hour. The men degenerated into savagery; the women became unsexed." Cruelty, lust for human life, were manifest everywhere. Berlin rejoiced at the "Lusitania" incident, the massacre of Armenians, the introduction of poison gas, discrimination against English prisoners, the drowning of neutrals, and the murder of Edith Cavell. The pulpit also incited to killing. "One could not believe that this restless, brutal, bitter, merciless, blood-crazed multitude were the cultured, happy, devoutly religious people of a short time ago." "A torpedo striking home bears the message of God," "Would that the just God in his righteousness might bestow on the bullet from the German gun the magic power of the jawbone of the ass and slay ten thousand of the enemy with each bullet," were characteristic utterances from the pulpits of Berlin. The pulpit is prostituted to the military aims of the state. The people have lost the consolations of religion. The church is distrusted; the people are shepherdless in their great affliction. Hopelessness, agnosticism, and blasphemy are everywhere, in spite of the Kaiser's intimacy with God. The terrible increase in the number of suicides, especially of women, is a commentary on the state of mind.

"From the quiet, amiable friendliness of the pre-war life the people of Berlin had grown like creatures of the wild. . . . The doctrines they advocated were appalling. From a fairly liberal interpretation of the Golden Rule they suddenly narrowed to 'Do what I say and in such a way as I please.'

The whole world must bend to their will; and in the effort to enforce that will they would wreck the whole world. . . . They were coarsened, brutalized."

#### **A Note on Some Recently Collected New Testament Fragments**

One would expect after looking through the monumental editions of the New Testament, the collections, corpora, and such accumulations as those of Wessely, Wilcken, Crum, and the like, that an end were made of establishing the text of the New Testament. But in the great libraries of London, Oxford, Cambridge, Paris, Berlin, Vienna, Rome, and a dozen lesser cities of Europe; in cloister collections visited and unvisited, from Sinai to the recesses of Asia Minor; perchance hidden away in the sands of some forgotten site of Egypt—who knows—are treasures yet to be brought to light. The history of the growth of our Greek New Testament is one of the world's wonders. Students here and there, more or less isolated, gather up little stores of materials. Men of more genius or more opportunity gather these materials into a new edition and so the work begins again. From Erasmus to Wetstein, Griesbach to Lachmann, and from Tischendorf to Westcott-Hort and von Soden is indeed a scenic route.

Gregory's and von Soden's books appeared, the latter in 1902 and the former in 1908-9. Since then discoveries have gone on. Many manuscripts and fragments enumerated by them still need collating, many notations made by them for further editions are left unpublished at their death, and no one man encompasseth all things. From year to year new lists brought down to date are being published, and each successive statement is antiquated almost as soon as published.

From a collation of over seventy of these fragments recently made, certain points seem clear: (1) So far no striking changes appear. There is nothing so marked as, for

example, the addition to the conclusion of Mark in the Freer Gospels. There is nothing so spectacular as Ramsay's proposed emendation in I Pet. 3:19. Barring unexpected finds, the future work of the New Testament scholars will be one of refining of details. (2) On the whole, these fragments support the neutral text, which, sometimes called pre-Syrian, is thought to come nearest the apostolic originals. This text is represented by the great codices **NB**. Many years ago, in the course of a lecture, Professor Gregory remarked that a certain peculiarity in the signatures of Cod. B led him to suspect Coptic origin. These fragments, of Egyptian origin, support B. Hence they furnish a further indication of the Egyptian source of Cod. B and of the neutral text. As for Cod. **N**, it came of course from Sinai. (3) The abundance of itacisms suggests transcription from dictation. In practically every instance itacisms occur,  $\alpha$  for  $\epsilon$ ,  $\epsilon$  for  $\alpha$ ,  $\eta$  for  $\epsilon$  or  $\epsilon$ , and their vice versa's. So also  $\omicron$  and  $\omega$  appear interchangeable. (4) There is a suggestion here of the customary pronunciation of the Greek language at the time the manuscripts were written. The old Erasmian method, still regnant in our colleges, has long been under criticism. Why saddle an artificial scheme on Greek and not on other still living tongues? It seems but a series of steps from the pronunciation implied in these fragments and the living Greek of today—no more than the difference between the English of Chaucer and present-day English speech. (5) The Gospels abound in variants more than the other portions of the New Testament. This is to be expected, for, probably, the Gospels were most frequently copied—thus increasing the probabilities of error—and the Gospels would thus more abound in the hands of the poor and ignorant. The language of the New Testament—the language of these fragments—is the language of the common folk.

### **The Educational Theory of Social Progress**

Professor Charles A. Ellwood sets forth his theory of social progress in the November number of the *Scientific Monthly*. Civilization is an acquired trait. The mass of habits are transferred from generation to generation by custom and tradition. Each generation must learn this mass of habits anew. The infant is given only capacity to acquire the habits of its social environment. The difference between the children of primitive conditions and those of civilization is merely the difference of entering a different environment—civilization is not inborn. The conclusion is therefore that the methods of continuing and developing human social life in its cultural phases must be essentially of an educational nature.

Education is a method, not a cause, of progress. The educative process means the whole process of controlling the formation of habit and character, of ways of thinking and acting in the individual. The instruments are the home, the school, the church, the press, and public address; in a different way, the shop, the factory, and the market-place. Dr. Ellwood's thesis is that the active factors in progress may be most advantageously, economically, and effectively controlled in human society by the educative process. The social evolution of the past has proceeded essentially by the method of education. It is the failure of the educative process which is the immediate cause of the periods of moral and intellectual decadence in human society. The progress to higher social life in the future will depend upon the educative process. Revolutions will not do it. They may clear the way of obstacles, but to have permanency there must be the adjustment of the individual to higher social needs by education. This education is not the impartation of knowledge, but the artificial control of the formation of habits and character in the individual so as to fit him to participate efficiently in the social life.

If education in this sense were consciously used as an instrument of social progress, it would (1) make the normal individual many times more efficient socially than he is at the present time; (2) make more harmonious the relations between individuals. This is where the individualistic education of the nineteenth century failed.

"After this war it is to be hoped that we shall take up the work of socializing our system of education in earnest as the true foundation on which we can build a worthy civilization for the future. For civilization is only just beginning. The work of rational and scientifically planned social progress lies all ahead. And socialized education is the key to such progress."

### **The Movement toward Peace**

Bruno Lasker of the *Survey* staff has a lengthy article in the *Yale Review* for October in which he attempts to point "The Way to Durable Peace." In summary he says that the key to a durable peace must be sought in the gradual disintegration of territorial sovereignty by economic co-operation. The *Realpolitik* of the future will concern itself less with geographical statics and more with social dynamics. Only excessive optimism expects an immediate, vast extension of international control over the relationships of nations after the war. The immediate adoption of free trade is unlikely. Animosity will cling for a long time. Yet, even in the stress of war, the factors creative of the future are emerging. There is an intense desire everywhere for a new and stronger system of international government and jurisdiction. A world-conscience is taking shape—a public opinion directed to practical ends. We begin to see too that for the sake of peace we must give up the seeming national security of economic isolation to secure the real security which comes from giving free play to all the vital forces of the world. There will be problems connected with the

present idea of nationality and with the emergence of new world-powers, but economic freedom and the widest untrammelled intercourse among nations are the way to peace.

"When will wars cease?" asks the *Unpopular Review* in the October number. A glance at the wars of the civilized world shows that they have been for the most part religious or dynastic. Religious wars are now unlikely to occur. In times when all states were the private property of their rulers dynastic wars were a matter of course. Napoleon was a plain brigand who sought to found a dynasty. The Crimean War was over the balance of power—fear lest one dynasty become too strong for the rest. But now, with France a republic, England democratic, Italy a liberal monarchy, there is no talk of balance of power. The Franco-Prussian War was welcomed by Napoleon III to divert agitation which threatened his dynasty. The present war is the work of practically a single dynasty engaged in a vast scheme of land piracy. The war has come now to a question of Hohenzollerns or no Hohenzollerns. The war will end when the world may treat with representatives elected by the German people. When dynasties are gone and the people of the world are arranged in democratic commonwealths we may expect to see the end of all but "small," or it may be "civil," wars.

Perhaps the most incisive treatment of the effort of the Vatican to secure peace is that of a writer in the *Contemporary Review* of October. The article is unsigned. He thinks that one very good reason that the Pope's appeal for conciliation has been refused is because he spoke too late. A Papacy which could keep discreet silence

in the presence of the initial evils of the war could not but lose moral authority. The time to have spoken was when the whole world waited for some commanding protest against the horrible inhumanities and injustices of 1914. To speak in 1917 is to speak too late. It is also too soon—for repentance must precede forgiveness and reconciliation, reparation must follow the crime, and justice alone can be the foundation of a lasting peace. But a more important reason for the refusal of the proposal of the Pope is the fact that the Vatican has been the center of German propaganda and on more than one occasion has been the instrument of German policy. Erzberger, the leader of the Centre Party in Germany, is known to be the representative of the Vatican, leader of millions of German Catholics, and public utterances of this man have not been exceeded, in ruthless inhumanity and brutal bloodthirstiness, by any German propaganda. Why did not the Vatican repudiate him? The Vatican is in close political alliance with the Germanic powers. Since 1887 the Catholic German Centre Party has stood for despotism, for war, for Pan-Germanism. The efforts of the Pope to secure peace are today unavailing and futile because one of his predecessors became the tool of Prussian militarism. The Pope wants to save the Hapsburgs and the prestige of the German Centre Party. Yet this Catholic party has been more directly responsible for German and Austrian crimes than even the Junkers. The appeals of the Sacred College and of the Vatican fall upon deaf ears because the influence of the Sacred College has proved itself a pro-German influence and the Vatican has not repudiated its secret solidarity with the enemies of civilization.